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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

VIA : Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : John F. Blake  
Deputy Director for Administration

SUBJECT : Retention of Classification of  
Unevaluated Intelligence Reports

1. Action Requested: Approval of declassification policy described herein and signature of letter to the Archivist.

2. Background:

a. The National Archives and Records Service (NARS) on 22 April 1977 determined that unevaluated intelligence reports disseminated by the Operations Directorate to agencies within the Intelligence Community are permanent records because these reports constitute a record of the dissemination of foreign intelligence collected by the Agency. Furthermore, large numbers of these reports have already been accessioned to NARS as permanent records by other U.S. Government agencies.

b. All permanent records are subject to systematic review for declassification as required in Executive Order 11652 and, as of 1 December 1978, Executive Order 12065. Documents twenty years of age, thirty years as to foreign government information, must be declassified unless the agency head certifies that continued classification is required for national security reasons.

c. The classification review of unevaluated intelligence reports produced in the period 1946-50 has raised serious questions regarding the declassification and release of unevaluated reports. Although the substance of individual reports often does not merit continued classification, items in the report format, such as "Place Acquired", provide evidence of CIA operations and of liaison relationships which warrant continued protection. Also, "Source" descriptions, even though general, pinpoint sectors within

a country from which agents were reporting to CIA and tend to reveal liaison relationships. Such revelations of CIA operations, even though thirty years old, would not be viewed kindly by the country concerned. A further risk is posed by the declassification and release of a group of reports, on a specific country or topic, which individually would do no harm but in the aggregate reveal CIA interests and scope of operations during a given time frame. CIA has to provide guidance to NARS for conducting the classification review of unevaluated CIA reports accessioned to NARS as permanent records by other government agencies. It is our intention to maintain classification of all such reports and instruct NARS personnel to act accordingly. This will eliminate the document-by-document review now conducted.

d. The problem of protecting CIA equities while carrying out the intent of the Executive Orders to declassify as much information as possible was raised with Mr. Edwin Alan Thompson, Director, Records Declassification Division (NARS). Recognizing that the substantive content of many unevaluated reports does not justify continued classification, Mr. Thompson discussed the continued protection of these reports because of their revealing format with the Deputy Archivist, Dr. James E. O'Neill. In their view, categorizing unevaluated intelligence reports in order to retain classification of the reports as a class is a feasible solution to protect CIA equities.

e. It is concluded that CIA can and should continue to retain classification on all unevaluated intelligence reports for the reasons stated and in the light of the position taken by the National Archives and Records Service. If these reports are subsequently requested under the Freedom of Information Act or mandatory review provisions of Executive Order 12065, they can be reviewed by CIA for possible sanitization and release of non-sensitive information.

3. Staff Position: This matter has been coordinated with the Office of General Counsel, and DDO/IMS fully concurs in the position taken above.

4. Recommendation: That you approve as Agency declassification policy that unevaluated intelligence reports are a category of information that must continue to be classified at the time the twenty or thirty year systematic reviews are conducted, and that you sign the attached letter on this policy to Dr. Rhoads, Archivist of the United States.

  
John F. Blake

STATINTL

Attachment: a/s

SUBJECT: Retention of Classification of Unevaluated Intelligence Reports

APPROVED (X)      DISAPPROVED ( )

*A*  
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Director of Central Intelligence

16 OCT 1978

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Date

*SYNOPSIS ATTCH. LGTR*  
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Washington, D.C. 20505

Dr. James B. Rhoads  
Archivist of the United States  
National Archives and Records Service  
Eighth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Room 111  
Washington, D.C. 20408

Dear Dr. Rhoads:

I am informed that our respective staffs concerned with the systematic review of permanent records for declassification under E.O. 11652 and E.O. 12065 mutually recognize that the declassification and release to the public of unevaluated intelligence reports would pose serious security problems. Although the substance of individual reports often does not merit continued classification, items in the report format, such as "Place Acquired" provide evidence of CIA operations in a given country if the report is declassified and released to the public. Source descriptions, even though general, pinpoint sectors within a country in which agents are reporting to CIA. Such official revelations of CIA operations are likely to be viewed with some jaundice, at least by the country concerned, with attendant risk to present operations. A further risk is posed by the declassification and release of a number of reports, on a specific country or subject, which individually might do no harm but in the aggregate reveal CIA interests and scope of operations during a given time frame.

In consideration of these risks and in accord with the oral understanding reached by our respective staffs, I concur that unevaluated intelligence reports require continued retention of classification to protect intelligence sources and methods and prevent any adverse impact that declassification and release of these reports could have on the foreign relations of the United States.

*Flawless by ABC*

You are hereby authorized to retain classification on all those unevaluated SO, SODB, DB, OO, and field intelligence reports that have been accessioned as permanent records to NARS by other agencies. If these reports should become the subject of requests under the FOIA or the mandatory review provisions of E.O. 12065, they should be referred to this Agency for sanitizing of format and release of non-sensitive information.

My staff concerned with classification review stands ready to assist in any problems of procedure that may arise.

Yours sincerely,

STANSFIELD TURNER

STATINTL

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